39 CLUES TO KNOW YOU'VE OUTGROWN EXCEL & POWERPOINT
In businesses today, Excel is the most commonly used program for financial reporting, despite the high likelihood of error.

According to our studies, nine in 10 spreadsheets contain errors. In fact, errors occur in 1% or more of all cells. In large spreadsheets with thousands of formulas, the issue is not “if” an error exists, but how many.

Errors are just one problem users have with using Excel for reporting. With all that can go wrong, it’s really strange that Excel remains such a popular program for reporting.
Your report is sent from one person to the next, to the next, and to the next. Every member of your team saves a slightly different version and by the end of the hour, there are at least five different versions of one report floating around that you need to piece together.
People want to add in their information the day of the meeting, just hours before. Since several people can’t make changes at the same time, everyone is adding in their information or making changes as quickly as possible, and then sending it off to the next person.
Sometimes when changes are made, vital data is lost.

There’s no way to see who changed numbers, when data was lost, or how many other cells and sheets are impacted.
As you’re going through reports in a meeting, you realize that data has been lost, making you look and feel incompetent.
A change to one spreadsheet could mean that several numbers in other spreadsheets also need to be changed, but this doesn’t always happen when multiple people are adding to or are changing a report.
There is no way to distinguish users, so everyone has access to everything. Even if they’re not supposed to, people in sales can change information that only people in accounts should be dealing with, and vice versa.
Templates are used in hopes of maintaining consistency, but sometimes, someone’s information won’t work with the template constraints, requiring custom updates.
Managers want to see a new line item at every meeting, so you continually have to change and update the template. It's never finalized.
If the template you decide to use for reporting doesn’t fit the needs of some people’s information, they scrap that template and make updates to fit their information.
Someone does you a “favor” by creating a custom template everyone can plug into. But when they aren’t around, no one has any idea how to input data correctly because they don’t know what the formulas are referring to, and no one can get any real insight from the numbers.
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Being able to create custom templates allows executives to have preferences on the reports they get—even down to dictating what colors or fonts should be used. It’s a complete waste of time meeting these requirements.
You try to open up a spreadsheet but Excel tells you that the document is locked for editing by another user. The read-only format does nothing for you when you need to make changes.
When you share a spreadsheet, sometimes it will lock you out, even if someone isn’t actively editing it. There are ways to work around it, but they just waste your time.
It’s easy to make a typographical error and not even realize it. Even just one incorrect number makes the entire spreadsheet and report inaccurate.
When people are in a rush to add in their information, they can easily hit two keys when only one was supposed to be hit—“fat fingering” it. It throws off the rest of the report.
According to Raymond Panko, there are three kinds of spreadsheet errors: quantitative (the spreadsheet gives an incorrect result), logic (someone entering in the wrong formula because of a mistake in reasoning), and omission (something is left out). In 88% of spreadsheets, at least one of these errors occurs.
Missing information within a spreadsheet is the most difficult error to detect, yet the most dangerous to a business.
The ease of “cut and paste” has resulted in companies losing significant revenue. Some businesses have lost billions of dollars due to simple cut-and-paste errors.
People get so stuck in manual reporting in Excel that they will actually work with whatever the spreadsheet says—even something as ridiculous as, “There were ‘.5’ people that signed up today.” Then you have to argue the point that “half of a person” can't sign up for something.
Email updates or summaries are sent to the wrong people, giving them information that they are not cleared to have.
The only way you can accurately check for errors is to go row by row, and cell by cell, checking each and every entry.
The formatting changes in PowerPoint as new updates are released. But, people like results to be displayed the same way every time. And, when the format changes, it can distract from the actual results and message.
No matter how you format your cells, some of them just will not print correctly.
You spend a lot more time than you should on big and little formatting fixes to make any spreadsheet look more presentable, taking away from time you could spend focusing on the actual content of what you’re working on.
Some people like to see things laid out horizontally rather than vertically. Maybe they're used to seeing the dates on the top and metrics on the side, but someone likes it the other way around. You can't make everyone happy so you switch back and forth a few times, making your previous reports impossible to compare to.
Newer versions of Excel are not compatible with older versions.
It’s easy enough, but still an absolute pain to embed every chart you want to use from Excel into a PowerPoint presentation.
If you need to link information from one spreadsheet or workbook into another, there is no automatic way to tell how many or which cells have links.
When you need to link information from multiple spreadsheets and workbooks, circular linking can happen (two or more spreadsheets contain links to each other), resulting in slow updates.
Usually PowerPoint or email is used to summarize work in Excel and contracts. But when summarizing creates unnecessary rework—you bring all those things to a meeting just to end up going back to the actual Excel spreadsheet.
Functions don’t always work.
Companies are starting to switch from Excel to Google Sheets for sharing and editing purposes. But Google Sheets doesn't have nearly the same capabilities that Excel has, and their functions and formatting are slightly different, which means more of your time is spent reformatting.
As the author of a crazy-complicated linked Excel and PowerPoint report, you’ve made yourself indispensable. The good news: you’re never going to be fired. The bad news: you’re never going to be promoted, either, since no one else knows how to work this monster.
After doing hours and hours of work, Excel crashes and everything you’ve just done is gone.
You try to save a spreadsheet you just edited, but you get a “Not Responding” error window, the program closes, and you’ve lost all your updates.
When you update a formula in one cell, it should update everywhere, but it doesn’t.
After adding up your columns manually, you come out with a different number than Excel shows you.
If any of these situations describe what’s going on during your company’s reporting process, you have some pretty clear indications that your process is ready for some changes.

The longer you wait to improve your reporting process, the more time and money you’ll waste. So, don’t wait! Start changing your reporting process today.

We’d love to help you find the best solutions for the problems you’re facing with your reporting process.
WHERE TO NOW?

We’d love to show you how ClearPoint can help you leave Excel and PowerPoint behind for your reporting.

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